SCHOOL HISTORY

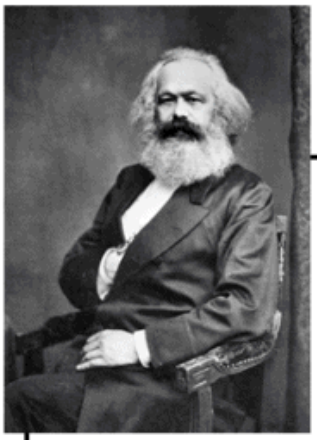
Karl Marx & Marxism

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Karl Marx and his personal life
- Events leading to the development of Marxism
- Impact of Marxism in the international arena

FACT FILE

Let's know more about Karl Marx & Marxism



Portrait of Karl Marx, 1875

Karl Marx was a German revolutionist and can be considered a philosopher, historian, sociologist, political theorist, journalist, and economist.

- He was born on 5 May 1818 and died on 14 March 1883.
- Marx was a Jew in Germany. His family converted to Christianity when he was six years old but he was never spiritual, once referring to religion as the "opium of the people".
- He used his influence in the journalism sector to spread his views.
- Karl Marx can be considered to have inspired the Russian Revolution through Vladimir Lenin.

Marx's views on society, economics, and politics fall into the term Marxism.

1 Historical Materialism and the context leading to Marxism

Marx believed that human societies develop through class struggle, that there is a gap between the rich and the poor. For instance, in capitalism, there is a manifestation of conflict and that helps control the means of production and those considered as working class. Labour is sold and the workers get wages in return for their work. This critical approach is known as historical materialism.

The trajectory of historical development as per the Historical Materialism

1 Primitive communism
Hunting and Gathering Stage; No classes

2 Ancient mode of production
Slave societies emerged

3 Feudalism
Distinct gap between poor and elite: Nobles and Serfs

4 Capitalism
Emergence of class conflict between proletariat and bourgeoisie

proletariat (workers) and bourgeoisie (upper-middle-class, business owners)

5 Socialism
Social Ownership

6 Communism
Classless society

Marx believed that **capitalism** would produce internal tensions and this would lead to its self-destruction and that it should be replaced by a new system, which he considered to be **socialism**. He also believed that the working class would develop class consciousness and this would lead to revolts since they would have a thirst for political power. A solution to this would be the establishment of a **classless communist society**. Marx actively campaigned for his beliefs in an attempt to topple capitalism and implement communism.

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THINK ABOUT THIS!

ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 11-14

1 **CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCES.** Marx believed that human societies develop through class struggle, that there is a gap between the rich and the poor. What are the factors behind the development of Marx's ideology?

MARXISM

Answers may revolve around the trajectory of historical materialism, the revolutions in Europe during Marx's time, or the Industrial Revolution.

2 **BIOGRAPHY.** Karl Marx greatly influenced several leaders in the world with his philosophy. Identify one such leader and highlight their role/s. (X marks)

Leaders may include Vladimir Lenin of Russia, Fidel Castro of Cuba and Mao Zedong of China.

THINK ABOUT THIS!

ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 14-16

1 **PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS**. One of the leaders who adopted Marx's ideology was Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Inspired by the Soviet Union, Mao injected these beliefs in governing the country. Analyse the given poster designed by Yu Zhenli in May 1976 entitled "We must grasp revolution and increase production, increase work, increase preparation for struggle, to do an even better job" then answer the given question: (X marks)

要抓革命促生产，促工作，促战备，把各方面的工作做得更好。

SOURCE A

GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What are the symbols used in the poster? What do they signify?
2. Who was the intended audience of the poster? What do you think was its purpose?
3. What does the title imply?
4. Whose perspective was used by the artist in conveying the message of the poster?
5. Do you agree with the message of the artist? Justify your answer.

1. The poster represents different people from different sectors of society.
2. The Chinese people, to motivate them regarding Mao Zedong's beliefs.
3. *"We must grasp revolution and increase production, increase work, increase preparation for struggle, to do an even better job"* - Answer may revolve around the notion of the proletarian revolution and how hard work signifies economic productivity.
4. The perspective of the government under Mao Zedong.
5. Subjectively based on the student's answer.

Source: IISH / Stefan R. Landsberger / Private Collection: https://chineseposters.net/gallery/g2-29_30.php